

**FINAL REPORT
APPELLATION YAKIMA VALLEY
FSMIP PROJECT #12-25-G-0406**

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Yakima and Benton Counties and the City of Prosser are linked by a 50-mile stretch of highway known as “Washington’s Wine Country”. This corridor is a very scenic, rural, and agricultural-based region of Central Washington. It has many small businesses that are positioned well for individuals traveling through Central and Southeast Washington State.

The Yakima Valley wine industry has proven to be economically beneficial to Yakima and Benton County communities both as an agricultural, value-added product and as a means of bringing tourism benefits to the rural communities and businesses that service the industries.

However, Appellation Yakima Valley is approximately 86 miles long, a large region that lends itself to independent promotion of wines in sub-areas like Zillah, Prosser, and Sunnyside instead of Appellation-wide. This lack of regional continuity and an absence of tools to communicate with tourists and other consumers were issues tackled under this grant.

HOW THE ISSUE OR PROBLEM WAS APPROACHED VIA THE PROJECT

To help resolve the lack of regional continuity, FSMIP grant resources were used to create a unified logo and branding. These features built upon the product segregation already achieved through having an established appellation. As a result, consumers, the media and distributors can now better understand the origins and current status of Appellation Yakima Valley, its wineries and growers.

To increase communication with consumers, a “Marketing Information Program” was developed including a website, brochure and map. The Wine Yakima Valley brochure and website are solid educational tools for informing target retailers, consumers, media, distributors and wine shop owners about the region, quality, and value of the wines that are grown and produced there. In time, these tools will increase demand for wine produced from the Yakima Valley Appellation, which will increase the price that the growers receive for their product.

The most important technical aspect of this project was to make the website easy to navigate and informative to the audience. The website includes information on each of the 43 wineries in the Association. An image of the winery’s label, overview, hours of operation, contact information as well as a mapquest feature offering exact directions to the winery have been included. Additionally, each wine grape grower has the same features on the website, i.e., image of the vineyard, overview of operation and contact information.

The site also features a calendar of events that helps keep our target audience apprised of upcoming events, dates, locations and other key information. Promotional and organizational events are vital in keeping our membership informed and educated on current happenings.

Media is another vital market for communication. The website offers a section of news releases or general information for the media. The value of media receiving updated information on this region is to encourage stories to be produced by their respective publications, increasing awareness of our region's value-added products. The partnership alliances created with our "sister" organizations by providing a link to their websites, again, fosters goodwill for future networking possibilities.

The website also has a membership feature offering a communication mode for members only. This feature offers association updates, news that members need to learn, organizational minutes, agendas, meeting notices, and other targeted materials. This site also allows members to post additional products or services that may be available.

CONTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC OR PRIVATE AGENCY COOPERATORS

The Association's executive director contributed her time to manage the overall project, creating and inputting all website content at its inception and will continue to do so in the future. With the assistance of the website developer, Stimson Lane (a subsidiary of Chateau Ste. Michelle), grower and winery members of Wine Yakima Valley, and the Public Relations Steering Committee of the Association, ideas were established to make the site completely administrable in-house. This means that the site is user-friendly, allowing updates to be implemented by Wine Yakima Valley staff. Images for the website were purchased and/or provided by donations from Red Willow Vineyards, Washington Wine Commission and Harold Pleasant.

Wine Yakima Valley members invested over 70 hours of donated time providing guidance to the executive director and web site developer. Stimson Lane's custom software and engineering department were an important part of networking on this project. An accurate map of the Yakima Valley appellation had never been created until now, and was accomplished with donated employee hours.

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND LESSONS LEARNED

The website results can be found at www.wineyakimavalley.org and www.wineyakimavalley.org/members. We have enclosed a printed version of what is on the web. (The brochure and map were already provided to FSMIP with the 6-month progress report.)

After much research and discussion, it was decided that a separate bulletin board area for members to post notices for equipment and product sales would require technical expertise for user postings. Currently, items are e-mailed to the Wine Yakima Valley office and staff makes the postings for the member. Polling membership regarding the

addition of this interactive website section would enable the association to pursue it in the future, if an interest exists.

CURRENT OR FUTURE BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM THE PROJECT

Communication and education are paramount to the success of Wine Yakima Valley. FSMIP funding enabled us to develop tools to assist in achieving communications and education that would otherwise require implementation through mass mailings, meetings or phone calls. Not only does this speed up the process immensely, but reaches a much larger number of our target audience. This site will be used as the basic, fundamental marketing tool for the Association as well as the key component to raising awareness statewide, nationally and globally. As the site is advertised in the future, there are a wide range of opportunities for education and promotion. Throughout the site, the audience is able to download to a hard copy every section of the brochure. The map is of particular benefit, allowing the user to identify locations within the state, the broad coverage area of our appellation, visually imprinting our region in the minds of the audience.

Future benefits could also include collecting payments from the site for such things as memberships, purchase of promotional items and ticket sales for promotional events.

CONTACT PERSON FOR MORE INFORMATION

Information on grant administration may be obtained by contacting Deb Heintz, Grant Administrator or Barb Glover, Executive Director for Wine Yakima Valley, PO Box 497, Prosser, WA 99350, Phone: 800-258-7270.